



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

DÜSSELDORF • GERMANY

## Newsletter for English Teachers August/ September 2005

This Newsletter for English Teachers is a monthly publication by the Information Resource Centers in Germany. It focuses on American Studies topics of relevance to our academic audiences.

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### Back to School, or "How I Spent My Summer Vacation"

Most Americans consider Labor Day the end of the summer, and the beaches and other popular resort areas are packed with people enjoying one last three-day weekend. This holiday, which always is observed on the first Monday of September has been a federal holiday since 1894. Its purpose is to honor the nation's working people. For many students Labor Day marks the opening of the school year.



(AP Photo/Orlin Wagner)

A long summer break running from June to early September used to be normal in the United States; but in fact, today, about three-fourths of American public schools start before September 1. Part of what is driving the earlier school starting dates is the growing pressure that comes with standardized tests. Under President Bush's No Child Left Behind law, schools can face a range of possible sanctions, including school restructuring and faculty job loss, if students don't meet test certain standards. While state-mandated instructional days have generally stayed stable at around 180 days, earlier school starts shift the academic calendar so that the fall semester ends at winter break. Students are able to take midterm exams before the holidays while the material is still fresh, and don't have to cram for exams that would otherwise be given the week they get back.

In a recent Gallup Youth Survey, the majority of teens, however, said they would prefer a long summer vacation. Only 25% said they prefer a shorter summer break with periodic 2-week vacation breaks during the rest of the year. Kids aren't the only ones who complain about shorter school vacations. Museums, theme parks and other tourist attractions say shorter summer vacations take away part-time workers, complicate family travel plans and cut into summer camp attendance, a key source of seasonal revenue.

In another Gallup Youth Survey, teens were asked what they do during summer vacation. Summer temperatures and free time mean that teens spend more times outdoors and more time playing sports. In addition, altogether almost 25% of teens between the age of 16 and 17 hold summer jobs. Individual states may have regulations on when and where a teenager may work, but federal regulations allow teenagers above the age of 16 to work in any job that has not been declared hazardous by the Department of Labor. Teens who are above average in academic standing are twice as likely to work than teens that rate their academic performance as average or below average. High-achieving teens often work during the summers at jobs or internships to help save or prepare for college. Teens, however, also find time during the summer to "hang out with friends" (12%), relax and have fun (10%), spend time with their families (8%), travel (7%), and go to summer school (4%) or camp (3%).

National Geographic Kids surveyed younger teens about their ideal vacation. Going on a cruise was the favorite vacation idea of children age 8-14. Going to the beach was a distant second, followed by going to an amusement park. Only 2% thought of going to summer camp as a perfect vacation. Asked to identify the one item they couldn't go on vacation without, 22% of respondents cited books, 19% stuffed animals, 17% music (iPod, Discman, boom box, etc.), and 13% Game Boys or other portable videogame devices.

And what about Americans in general? According to the Travel Industry Association of America, Americans are taking more vacation trips, but they're of shorter duration. The top three vacation activities are visiting friends and relatives (75%), going to a beach or lake (70%), and visiting small towns or rural areas (64%). Florida (40%), California (36%), Hawaii (22%), New York (19%), Colorado (17%), and Nevada (17%) are the states U.S. adults say they'd like to visit in the next two years. The most popular specific destinations of interest to U.S. leisure travelers include the Neighbor Islands of Hawaii (63%), Honolulu (59%), the Florida Keys (53%), the mountain resorts of Colorado (46%), and Lake Tahoe (46%). Other popular destinations include New York City (45%), Orlando (44%), and Las Vegas (43%). Internationally, Australia is the top vacation dream spot for adults in the United States behind Italy (#2), Great Britain (#3), Ireland (#4) and France (#5). These were the results of a study by Harris International.

- **Facts for Features: Back to School 2005**  
[http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/005225.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/005225.html)
- **About the USA > Society > Education**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/society-education.htm>
- **Facts for Features: Labor Day 2005**  
[http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/005289.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/005289.html)
- **About the USA > Holidays > Labor Day**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/holidays-labor.htm>
- **About the USA > Travel & Geography**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/travel.htm>

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In 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim a week in September as National Hispanic Heritage Week. The observance was expanded in 1988 to a month long celebration (Sept. 15-Oct. 15). During this month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean. Sept. 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

U.S. 13.7 percent

Dark Blue	25.0 or more
Teal	12.5 to 24.9
Light Green	6.0 to 12.4
White	Less than 6.0

- **About the USA > Society > Hispanic Americans**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/society-hispanics.htm>
- **Hispanic Heritage Month (InfoPlease.com)**  
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/hhm1.html>
- **We the People: Hispanics in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau)**  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-18.pdf>
- **Chicano Literature and Culture (Thematic Classroom Package)**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/classroom/chicanoliterature.htm>
- **Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month: Lesson Planning Article (Education World)**  
[http://www.education-world.com/a\\_lesson/lesson023.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson023.shtml)
- **Events in Hispanic American History**  
[http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/chh/timeline/index.htm](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/chh/timeline/index.htm)

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The U.S. Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day" in 1971 to commemorate the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted women in the United States the right to vote. Each year a Presidential Proclamation recognizes the hard work and perseverance of those who have helped secure women's suffrage.

- **Women's Equality Day**  
[http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/women/rights/equality\\_day.htm](http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/women/rights/equality_day.htm)
- **About the USA > Society > Women**  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/society-women.htm>

### **American Teenagers. New Electronic Journal**

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/ijse0705.htm>

This issue includes the following special features:

- **In Their Own Words - American Teenagers Provide Insights Into What They Think, Do, And Feel**  
Students from around the United States talk about their schools and communities, their love of music and sports, their religious and volunteer activities, and their plans for the future.  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/words.htm>



- **From Central Europe to Northern Ohio**  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/taylor.htm>  
Louisa Fricke and Arne Schlegelmilch from Germany and Zuzana Oravcova from Slovakia spent their 11th grade year attending a public high school in Amherst, Ohio, with the help of the International Student Exchange organization. They sat down with author Robert Taylor to discuss their impressions and experiences in making friends in a new country, dealing with a different academic environment, and adjusting to America's automobile and fast-food culture, and their plans for the future.

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### **Monument in Washington to Honor Martin Luther King Jr.**

A national monument honoring the legendary civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the first monument on the National Mall honoring an African-American, is scheduled for groundbreaking in November 2006, after a lengthy push to raise the necessary funds.



(AP/WWP Photo)

The memorial will be constructed on four acres near the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Monument, in direct sight of the Lincoln Memorial, where King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on August 28, 1963, at the March on Washington, which drew a record crowd of 250,000.

King's speech inspired millions of Americans to join the fight against racial injustice and support equality for all Americans.

The speech remains one of the most moving and influential in American history. He spoke of an America where his children "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." His relentless efforts to encourage racial and economic equality brought about significant changes in America. Since his death in 1968, King's vision lives on through his speeches and the successes achieved by his mission.

Source: Washington File, August 25, 2005

<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile->

[english&y=2005&m=August&x=20050824190222alrehttp0.3509333&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html](http://english&y=2005&m=August&x=20050824190222alrehttp0.3509333&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html)

- "I Have a Dream" Speech Anniversary, August 28, 2005  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/blackhis/king/index.htm>
- King's Dream Revisited (Learners Online Lesson Plan)  
<http://www.learneronline.com/weekly/lessons02/week3/index.htm>
- About the USA > Society > African Americans  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/society-blacks.htm>
- About the USA > Holidays > Martin Luther King Day  
<http://usa.usembassy.de/holidays-mlking.htm>

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### **Texas Becomes Nation's Newest "Majority-Minority" State**

Texas has now joined Hawaii, New Mexico and California as a majority-minority state, along with the District of Columbia, the U.S. Census Bureau reported today. Five states — Maryland, Mississippi, Georgia, New York and Arizona — are next in line with minority populations of about 40 percent. (The minority population includes all people except non-Hispanic single-race whites.)

According to July 1, 2004, population estimates, Texas had a minority population of 11.3 million, comprising 50.2 percent of its total population of 22.5 million. In comparison, 77 percent of Hawaii's population was minority. In New Mexico and California, the proportions were 57 percent and 56 percent, respectively, while the District of Columbia was 70 percent minority. <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/index.html>

#### **Background**

- Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority-minority\\_state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority-minority_state)

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### **Articles**

A selection of recent articles on American society

#### **American Evangelicalism: An Introduction**

By Hilde Løvdal. *The Americanist*, July 2005

<http://www.theamericanist.com/journal/july05/july05-4.html>

Anyone interested in American society, politics, and culture has heard of the term "Evangelical Christian." Many have a vague idea of what it actually refers to, but find it difficult to grasp what Evangelical Christians believe in, how they live, and why they live the way they do. Even scholars and people within the movement debate what "evangelical" really means. As the editors of *Christianity Today* (a leading evangelical magazine) comment, the term has been used to "describe a theology, a subculture, a religious attitude, a mission emphasis, and some even argue it represents a mythical group."

#### **Ten Ideals That Shaped America, NPR, July 4, 2005**

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4726347>

The ideals that have shaped what it means to be American are the subject of Neil Baldwin's latest book, *The American Revelation: Ten Ideals That Shaped Our Country*



From the Puritans to the Cold War. Baldwin takes the work of 10 idealists to paint a picture of the American spirit as it has been defined over the last 300 years.

**Class Matters. New York Times Special articles series, May 15 - June 12, 2005**

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/index.html> [free registration required]

A team of reporters spent more than a year exploring ways that class - defined as a combination of income, education, wealth and occupation - influences destiny in a society that likes to think of itself as a land of unbounded opportunity. This series does not purport to be the last word on class. It offers no nifty formulas for pigeonholing people. Instead, it represents an inquiry into class as Americans encounter it.  
(Lesson plans at [http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues\\_in\\_depth/20050515.html](http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues_in_depth/20050515.html))

**How America Eats**

**U.S. News and World Report, August 15, 2005**

<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/050815/15intro.htm>

What is it about Americans and food? Perhaps the answer lies in our history. This special features includes articles on: Slaves: They changed what we eat; Immigration: A tasty melting pot; Red, white, and blueberry: What is American cuisine? And many more



**Travel in the Future. By Rob Campos**

**Hi Magazine, August 2005**

[http://www.hiinternational.com/articles/art4\\_en.cfm??topicId=4&id=408](http://www.hiinternational.com/articles/art4_en.cfm??topicId=4&id=408)

Flying cars, trips into space, electric fuel - the future of transportation seems right out of a science fiction movie. And the future is closer than you think.

**In The Footsteps Of Tocqueville. Lévy, Bernard-Henri**

**Atlantic Monthly, May 2005 - July/August 2005 (3 part series)**

Commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of Alexis de Tocqueville, the legendary interpreter of America, another Frenchman spent nearly a year traveling from one end of the country to the other to report on what he found. Drawing comparisons with Tocqueville as he journeys throughout the United States, Lévy reveals many insights into the American psyche from the simple to the profound.

*[Not available full text online, please contact your IRC for a copy]*

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**<http://infoalert.usembassy.de>**

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## **Web Site Suggestions**

**Common Errors in English**

Paul Brians, Professor of English, Washington State University, Pullman, WA

<http://www.wsu.edu/%7Ebrians/errors/errors.html>

"The concept of language errors is a fuzzy one. I'll leave to linguists the technical

definitions. Here we're concerned only with deviations from the standard use of English as judged by sophisticated users such as professional writers, editors, teachers, and literate executives and personnel officers. The aim of this site is to help you avoid low grades, lost employment opportunities, lost business, and titters of amusement at the way you write or speak."

### **Say It Plain: A Century Of Great African American Speeches**

American RadioWorks

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/>

A collection of the audio and transcripts of speeches by famous African Americans. Features speeches by Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, Mary McLeod Bethune, Dick Gregory, Fannie Lou, Hamer, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King Jr., Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Jesse Jackson, Clarence Thomas, and Barack Obama. Also includes audio and transcripts of the accompanying radio documentary and links to related sites.

### **The Mississippi: River of Song**

<http://www.pbs.org/riverofsong/>

Companion to a "Smithsonian Institution series for public television ... that explores the richness and vitality of American music at the close of the twentieth century." The site features information about music in different regions along the Mississippi and biographies and audio and video clips for musicians in genres such as blues, Cajun, bluegrass, gospel, folk, hip hop, jazz, rock, and ethnic and traditional music. Includes a teacher's guide and links to related sites.

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### **America 24/7 - Telling America's Story in Pictures**

<http://www.america24-7.com/about/index.shtml>

About the project:

America 24/7 gave tens of thousands of Americans the opportunity to create a national family album during one ordinary week (May 12-18, 2003). They took digital pictures of their kids, their friends, their pets and their community. They photographed the things that are great about their town, and the things they would change. The results of this extraordinary photo shoot were published by DK, a publisher of distinctive, elegant, books for adults and children. The first volume of the America 24/7 series is a gorgeously printed 304-page large-format book featuring the very best work from professional and amateur photographers across the United States. The national volume was released in October 2003, in conjunction with nationwide publicity, a traveling exhibition of photographs and a compelling website gallery.



**Extra copies of a condensed, paperback version of this book are available to subscribers of the Teacher Newsletter for free on a first come, first served basis. Please contact us at [IRCCologne@state.gov](mailto:IRCCologne@state.gov)**



**Location:** Flint Hills, Kansas

**Caption:** Three-year-old Bailey Lewis, her mom, dad, and two brothers live and work on a 5,000-acre cattle ranch in central Kansas, in the heart of the Flint Hills prairie.

**REQUIRED CREDIT:**  
(c) 2003 Dan White from America 24/7.

## Meet the Author

### Dawn Clifton Tripp

Im Rahmen unserer Sonderveranstaltungen zum 50-jährigen Bestehen des Amerika Hauses in Köln möchte ich Sie mit dem beiliegenden Flyer herzlich zu einer Lesung der amerikanischen Autorin Dawn Clifton Tripp ins Amerika Haus Köln einladen.

Die Lesung wird am **14. September 2005 um 19 Uhr im Amerika Haus** stattfinden. Einzelheiten zu der Begegnung mit Dawn Clifton Tripp, ihrem Heimatort in Neuengland und Ihrem neuen Roman (The Season of OpenWater) finden Sie in der Anlage (Acrobat \*.pdf Format).

"The Season of Open Water" is Dawn Clifton Tripp's second novel.

Set once again on the coast of New England against the backdrop of the prohibition of the 1920s, rum-smuggling and the stock market crash of 1929, The Season of Open Water is both historical fiction and a love story. "I wanted to explore the seasonal changes and the tensions they create in the context of a love story which is essentially a story of love and class." The book's title refers to a brief period during the arctic summer when the snow melts, a time which suggests (in the novel) that "beauty and violence are not separate, life and death cannot be unfolded from one another" (Dawn Clifton Tripp).

## Film Preview

Darüberhinaus möchten wir Sie noch auf eine Film Preview in englischer Sprache aufmerksam machen, zu denen Sie sich auch bei uns anmelden können:

**"Pride and Prejudice"** - eine ganz neue Verfilmung des Jane Austen Romans am Dienstag, dem 18. Oktober 2005 um 20 Uhr. Dieser Film schwelgt in wunderbaren Landschaften, zeitgenössischen Interieurs und Kostümen und romantischen Gefühlen. Doch auch die scharfzüngige und witzige Sprache Jane Austen's kommt nicht zu kurz. Kurz, ein Film für Herz, Auge und Ohr. Auch um an dieser Preview teilzunehmen müssen Sie sich bei uns **vorher schriftlich anmelden**.

"Pride & Prejudice, the first movie version of Jane Austen's classic tale in 65 years, receives its world premiere as a Gala Presentation at the 30th Toronto International Film Festival®. September 8 -17, 2005. The glorious world of the author is at last brought back to the big screen in all its romance, wit, and emotional force. Faithful to the setting and period of the beloved novel and filmed entirely on location in the U.K, the film is directed by Joe Wright and stars Keira Knightley." [http://www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/2005/mediaCentre\\_releaseItem.asp?id=125](http://www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/2005/mediaCentre_releaseItem.asp?id=125)

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